Package for development of tea industry in Assam

767. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Assam Government has given a memorandum to the Central Government urging to expedite the special package for development of the tea industry since it is a revenue earning industry for the State;

(b) whether Government are aware about the crisis of the workers in this sector;

(c) if so, whether any steps are being considered by the Central Government to remove the plight of the workers; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The fall in prices of tea during the last few years, coupled with high costs of production, sluggish rate of growth in domestic demand and increased age of tea bushes have adversely affected the viability of tea gardens, particularly the medium sized and financially weak, resulting in closure/abandonment of some tea gardens in the country. This has caused problems of unemployment for workers in these tea gardens.

(c) and (d) The Plantations Labour Act, 1951 provides for the welfare of plantation labour and regulates the conditions of work in Plantations, including tea. This Act is administered by the State Governments, who are the appropriate authorities under the said Act to monitor the implementation of the various provisions in the Act. The Act also empowers the State Governments to make appropriate rules in this regard. Tea Board also supports some welfare programmes and activities for the benefit of tea plantation workers and their dependants in education and health care through their regular plan schemes. Several measures have been taken by the Government to assist the tea industry to tide over the situation. These include implementation of a Special Tea Term Loan envisaging restructuring/rephasing of irregular portion of outstanding term/working capital loans in the tea sector with repayment over 5 to 7 years with a moratorium of 1 year, implementation of a price subsidy scheme for small tea growers, introduction of a Price sharing formula for ensuring fair return to small growers, launching of quality upgradation programme aimed at improving the quality of tea and thereby improving the prices etc. In addition,

in the Union Budget for 2005-06, the additional excise duty of Re. 1/- per kg on tea has been withdrawn.

Incentives for industrial units in SEZs

†768. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD:
DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the industrial Units under Special Economic Zones in the country are provided special concession;

(b) if so, the details of facilities provided to such units; and

(c) the estimate of average annual financial aid to such units through these facilities in the country?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) The major entitlements available to units in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) include duty free import/domestic procurement of goods, exemption from Central Sales Tax on supplies from Domestic Tariff Area and 100% income tax exemption for first 5 years, 50% for the next 2 years and not exceeding 50% of ploughed back profits for next 3 years.

(c) These units are not granted any financial aid.

World Economic Forum

769. DR. VIJAY MALLYA:
SHRI LALIT SURI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that he led a delegation of industrialists and others to the annual meeting of the world Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland in January, 2005;

(b) if so, what are the major issues discussed at the forum;

(c) whether he has received assurances from the international industrial community on increased foreign direct investment into the country; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The major issues discussed at the forum

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.